

# **Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee**

## **September 19, 2006**

### **Meeting Summary**

Attending: Mike Flood, Robert Segreti (from the Northwest HS administration, attending in Principle Morrison's stead), Debbie Brown, Linda Katz, Larry Cole, Robin Jeweler, Jerry Donaldson, Delegate Bronrott, Fred Lees, Bill Frick, Erwin Mack, Kathy Porter, Matt Greene, Goldie Rivkin (liaison to the Commission on Aging).

#### **Item 1 – Welcome.**

The meeting began at 7:05 and Chairman Bill Frick gave words of welcome and everyone introduced themselves.

#### **Item 2 – Update on strategic assessment of PSAC activities.**

Mike Flood talked about the strategic evaluation of the PSAC's operation and mission in light of the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel Report. He distributed a draft document describing the same. He and Sue Morris had worked together on this. Mike explained that many recommendations had seen some progress and others didn't appear to have had much or any progress that could be known. He described the difficulty and impracticality of the PSAC trying to follow so many recommendations and that the purpose of the strategic evaluation was to assess whether the Committee ought to concentrate on fewer, higher priority items.

Bill Frick then noted that the committee had to decide in the coming months whether and how it would decide to pursue an extension of the PSAC's term past July 2007.

Erwin Mack noted that the term "Hot Spots" had changed to CSAFE (a part of the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention – CSAFE stands for Collaborative Supervision and Focused Enforcement). He noted that there had been nine pedestrian deaths at the intersection of New Hampshire and University Boulevard in recent years. He recommended talking with Laurie Kelly, as she was a knowledgeable advocate and an elementary school teacher at the Langley/McCormick Elementary School as well as the Chair of the Safe Roadways Committee in Takoma Park, who could provide advice on Safe Routes to School programs. There was then a brief discussion of the Safe Routes idea.

There were then several suggestions to expand involvement in the strategic review effort – several other PSAC members said they would like to participate. It was agreed that the draft strategic review document could be emailed to all members with the invitation to comment and participate in further shaping the strategic vision therein represented.

#### **Item 3 – Devising an effective education campaign.**

Linda Katz began the discussion of education efforts with several examples of past and on-going efforts, such as the Blair Walk program that is now being scheduled for Northwest High School. She had questions about how to move forward in light of having

so many items on the Education and Enforcement Subcommittee workplan and so few resources to carry out these items. She also expressed her alarm at recent pedestrian fatalities. She thinks one may have happened at a location where there was a fatality only a few years ago. And one was at a location she had identified last year and had also shown to Larry, Matt, and Fred on a walking tour only two months ago – East-West Hwy and Colesville Road. Linda would like to get the subcommittee together soon and develop one or more specific recommendations for projects that can be presented as budget requests.

Dr. Donaldson noted that behavior change through outreach and education requires a significant and sustained effort in order to be effective. Others agreed that we need more efforts in this area. Robin suggested that we should work within our current institutions rather than try to recreate or reinvent something. An example of this notion was getting pedestrian safety into the public schools curriculum, but it was also noted that even doing that requires a lot of time and resources. Delegate Bronrott asked how much money we had for educational work. The answer was our \$25,000 pedestrian safety funds, of which \$10,000 is spent annually on the Council of Governments' Sreet Smart Campaign. Then Delegate Bronrott described how he and another individual spent time visiting council members in 1999 in order to convey the importance of pedestrian safety and mobility initiatives. He thinks a similar effort might result in more money being dedicated to all three "Es" of safety. Matt was asked whether this seemed like an appropriate activity for the PSAC to engage in and Matt said that he thought it was probably fine but that he'd make sure it didn't go against any basic rules of the Committee. Delegate Bronrott then offered to accompany Chairperson Frick on any personal calls to the County's elected officials.

The question then arose about what the schools were doing in relation to pedestrian safety. Delegate Bronrott mentioned that optional curriculum had been developed. Matt noted that some schools in Rockville were using the curriculum, but that he didn't many others in the County were. Matt described some of the limited and decentralized efforts that go on with the assistance of AAA or district school safety officers from the MCPD. Erwin mentioned some difficulties trying to get training into some targeted schools in his area. Apparently, the superintendent did not approve. Mayor Porter also confirmed some difficulty in this effort.

The discussion turned at this point and Goldie Rivkin mentioned the recent fatalities and that maybe young drivers should be targeted in educational campaigns. Then she mentioned some conversations in a forum with seniors and that many people faced difficulty in crossing streets in the time allowed. She then suggested that the County report on some of its activities in order to demonstrate progress. Erwin Mack offered the observation that twelve million dollars is being spent on the new Langley Park Transit Center at University Blvd and New Hampshire and that this project is a tremendous improvement for pedestrians. Mike Flood offered that perhaps we should be communicating with Superintendent Jerry Weast in order to get pedestrian safety into the curriculum. Delegate Bronrott noted his disappointment in not having all schools participating in International Walk to School Day. He described how one school is selected to be the host but that only a small number of schools in total participate in the event. (The Pedestrian Safety Program provided 1,150 reflective armbands and 80 "globe strobe" blinking lights to participating schools as incentive items for student walkers.) He suggested early planning to make 2007 better. Robin Jeweler noted that in her experience with a PTA, there were troubles with parent drivers, neighbors who didn't

want kids congregating near their houses, and even police, whose support for the children sometimes gave way to other neighbor or traffic concerns. Delegate Bronrott assured her that part of the message of the Walk to School event is aimed at drivers “giving kids a brake.” Linda said that she would call a meeting of the education and enforcement subcommittee soon.

#### **Item 4 – Construction sidewalk closings (temporary traffic control planning).**

Larry described the situation at Fenton and Cameron in downtown Silver Spring. Larry, Matt, Fred, and Linda had toured the area in August and witnessed that no temporary traffic controls had been established to route and protect pedestrians. In fact, the sidewalk was not closed by sign or barrier and heavy equipment was operating on the sidewalk during the visit. Fred talked to the construction supervisor. A pedestrian walkway with appropriate signage was finally placed on the site between our visit and the PSAC meeting. This was months, if not more than a year, late. Other issues we’re making progress on: 1) MNCPPC working on site plan approval requirements that would include phasing. That is, the builder would be limited in sidewalk closings to only certain, necessary phases of construction rather than being given blanket approval to close sidewalks at will or for longer periods of time than necessary. 2) Fred discussed how DPWT had contacted the University of Maryland T2 Center and was arranging for training for Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and DPWT staff. Jerry Donaldson asked Fred if he knew about the proper training and certifications related to temporary traffic control planning and whether our employees were certified. Fred answered that he knew of these, that DPS employees were not certified, but that all contractors working on site needed to have these certifications. Jerry noted that there are many impromptu closings for short-term maintenance, probably hundreds at any given time, and that these often don’t include the proper signing. Fred noted that we can still make progress on this issue even if we’re not able to bring 100% of situations up to full compliance.

Bill Frick suggested that we should be fining contractors sometimes in the effort to improve compliance. Larry then discussed efforts to address the general issue of temporary traffic control planning within the Planning Department. He described how critical the problem is in our CBDs and areas with high pedestrian volumes. He then described opportunities to affect the timing of sidewalk closures during construction through the site plan review process and that staff were engaged in a process to implement changes to the process. Going back to Fred’s comments, Goldie Rivkin noted that mixing staff from different agencies in trainings would be helpful. She also commented on how she thought the whole transportation system was oriented to serving drivers at the expense of others. Fred and Larry both noted that changing the County Code won’t solve all of the problems associated with construction activity and temporary traffic control plans (TTCPs).

Jerry noted the long term fight between engineers and the transportation industry with the Architectural Barriers Compliance Board (the Access Board – see <http://www.access-board.gov>). He noted the difficulty in making all accommodations and that the issues are so complex it would be difficult and time-consuming just to follow this dispute. Larry noted that the County’s “Road Code” ([http://www.amlegal.com/montgomery\\_county\\_md](http://www.amlegal.com/montgomery_county_md) - navigate to Chapters 49 and 50 of the Code) is being amended and that the PSAC should review the proposed changes.

Mike Flood expressed interest in getting copies of proposed changes to the code and Matt said that he would look into this. Matt noted that it would be a proper roll for the PSAC to get involved if necessary in responding to citizen complaints about construction sidewalk closings or other issues.

## **Item 5 – Pedestrian Safety Dialogue in Friendship Heights on 9/25.**

The Committee discussed the venue and participants and other logistics for the planned outreach meeting in Friendship Heights. Goldie Rivkin offered that some of the residents might want to discuss personal safety issues other than walking. Linda asked about lessons learned from the first Dialogue in Takoma Park. Mayor Porter offered that it was a success in that it raised awareness generally about the issues and that it was quite helpful for members of Takoma Park's Safe Roadways Committee to get to know the PSAC. She also offered that we should be more specific in our advertising so that people will better understand what to expect, what kind of event this is. Chairman Frick asked about visiting the venue prior to the event. Matt agreed to contact the Village manager and arrange something.

## **Item 6 – Enforcement update.**

Delegate Bronrott said that lots of people from the Blair Apartments had contacted him about the intersection of East-West Highway and Colesville Road. The interest was generated by the pedestrian fatality that occurred there the afternoon of August 30. Matt agreed to check on planned enforcement details for the area and to get the information back to Delegate Bronrott. Erwin Mack described inter-jurisdictional pedestrian enforcement details planned for the Crossroads area. Linda said that last year feedback was given to the appropriate agencies on conditions at the East-West Highway – Colesville Road intersection and that the County had said that no action was needed. Delegate Bronrott said that the County is still saying this – that no engineering changes are needed. Larry offered that there are improvements that could be made and that the intersection is too wide. Delegate Bronrott said that “nothing needed” is not a satisfactory answer, that too many people live right near there and that many are poor and disabled and many rely on walking and transit. There were many nodding heads and other indications that there was general agreement in the room on these comments. Mike Flood and Larry Cole talked briefly and it was decided that Larry would take a closer look at this intersection and try to come up with some recommended changes.

Matt then offered some comments about the need for a change in the dominant philosophy and approach to transportation, which favors the movement of vehicles over the movement of people. Robin expressed some confusion over the Committee's purpose and asked whether we were still overseeing the implementation of the Blue Ribbon Panel's recommendations. She'd like to make positive changes but wants to know what our focus is. Bill Frick said that the PSAC should be concerned with higher level policy issues, but should also respond to concerns over particular issues or places, such as weighing in on conditions at the East-West Highway and Colesville Road intersection. Larry concurred that taking on specific issues is appropriate. Erwin commented that part of the purpose of our outreach meetings was to help people figure out where to go to report and solve specific problems.

## **Item 7 – Walking speeds & signal timing in other jurisdictions, new handheld device for street crossing safety.**

Goldie Rivkin said that she remembered the Commission on Aging having some communications with DPWT about identifying places where signal timing was an issue. She said the Commission had identified some places but that DPWT hadn't responded to their satisfaction. She would like to investigate or revisit this issue. Mike offered the question of whether we should be asking seniors to identify places needing longer pedestrian crossing times or whether the County should be trying to change signal timing where we know there are a lot of seniors or disabled people living.

Dr. Donaldson discussed some of the background involved in current efforts to lower the standard walking speed used in calculating crossing times for the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) from 4.0 to 3.5 feet per second. He explained that it can be difficult at some locations to make this change while still accommodating all road user groups. However, he gave the example of Broward County, Florida successfully moving forward in changing signal timing in favor of pedestrians. And he noted that it's a given that we'll have to address this issue more earnestly as time goes by because the fastest growing demographic cohort is the elderly.

Dr. Donaldson then described the use of pedestrian flags on Connecticut Avenue in the District and how driver yielding behavior was good. He explained that these flags are not approved devices according to the MUTCD. He would like us to consider the development of some kind of approved device for use in the County. This would mean going through the appropriate federal channels and researching the effectiveness of any newly designed device in the County on an experimental basis. He had a mock up of what one might look like and we were given a demonstration of the reflectivity of "retro-reflective" material when viewed head on with a flashlight to simulate the view a driver would get using headlights. Erwin mentioned that his group had investigated using hand held devices and that the State Highway Administration had said no. Dr. Donaldson said that he doesn't approve of using any device without Federal Highway Administration sanction for experimental use. Fred noted that this type of thing would have to go through the state and Dr. Donaldson said that would be fine, he could navigate all appropriate channels to get approval. Everyone seemed to think this would be a useful thing to pursue.

## **Item 8 – New Business/Citizen Concerns.**

Chairman Frick asked what's been done in the past to enhance safety during Halloween and said that he wouldn't mind helping in some effort this year. Delegate Bronrott talked about how Safe Neighborhood Day had been timed to coincide with Halloween in the past and told us that "crossing the street shouldn't be so scary!" We talked about asking Pam Miller (founder of Safe Neighborhood Day) for help in organizing something and Chairman Frick offered to follow up. Mayor Porter then mentioned that Matt was going to be briefing the Maryland Municipal League in two days and that he could mention the Dialogue on the 25<sup>th</sup> to get more turnout.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55.